

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Essay Contest – 2007
Third Prize: Audre Bennett, Lake Washington Girls Middle School

“The end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the Beloved Community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opposers into friends. It is this type of understanding goodwill that will transform the deep gloom of the old age into the exuberant gladness of the new age. It is this love which will bring about miracles in the hearts of men.”

This concept was what Dr. King thought of as an obtainable goal for our society. In order to achieve this goal of the Beloved Community, individuals would have to work towards eradicating forms of all inequity and be accepting of all kinds of people.

Dr. King believed in loving all. There were three types of love that he differentiated between: eros, philia, and agape love. The beginning of the Beloved Community starts with agape love. Dr. King described agape love as “understanding, goodwill for all”, and an “overflowing love which is purely spontaneous, unmotivated, groundless and creative.” Dr. King thought that in order for the Beloved Community to exist, it was necessary to have agape love. One way this love would be used in the Beloved Community would be to have justice for all. For every person in the Beloved Community, justice would be given. Another way agape love would be found in the Beloved Community would be for one to befriend one’s enemies and to accept them. However, Dr. King knew that working towards creating the Beloved Community would be the time when agape love would be needed most.

In the Beloved Community, racism and discrimination would not be tolerated. Conflict would be dealt with peacefully and nonviolently. Love and trust would overcome fear and hatred. Military conflict would be succeeded by peace and justice. Yet human nature differs from the ideals of the Beloved Community. We fear and hate others; 9/11 is evidence of this fear and hatred. We are selfish and believe that we alone are right; this egocentric behavior led to Hitler starting WWII. Very rarely do we have love for more than the people who are closest to us. Dr. King emphasizes the need to use nonviolence over violence in establishing the Beloved Community. However, human beings have been resorting to the method of violence to solve conflict for thousands of years. It would take a vast amount of peace talks, the global release of arms, and the mental readjusting of people around the world to change the habit of violence for generations of people.

In this world, a goal like the Beloved Community is difficult to imagine. For this to be accomplished, enemies would have to make friends with one and another, prejudice and racism would no longer exist, and all would be loving and accepting of each other. Dr. King believed that the Beloved Community could be achieved “by a critical mass of people committed to and trained in the philosophy and methods of nonviolence.” He believed that if one could achieve inter-group and inter-personal living in a nonviolent way, the result would be the Beloved Community. However, in order for people to live inter-personally, they have to trust one and another. For the Beloved Community to

become a reality, we as human beings must use nonviolent ways to solve disputes. We must not tolerate racial discrimination and we must love one and another.

In the end, it is possible to reach the Beloved Community only if the inhabitants of this world resort to nonviolent practices, only if there is agape love in the communities of the world, and only if people around the world are willing to change. Without a leader like Dr. Martin Luther King to guide people, the task of creating the Beloved Community will be even more arduous than when he was alive. We can only hope that in the years ahead, the goal of the Beloved Community will be achieved through hard work and the constant belief in love and peace.

Bibliography

Washington, James Melvin, ed. A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr. New York: Harper Collins (1986)

The King Center. "The Beloved Community." www.thekingcenter.org (2004)